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Security Council

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10 September 2015

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Letter dated 10 September 2015 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that your letters dated 27 August and 9 September 2015 (S/2015/669 and S/2015/696) regarding the establishment and operation of a Joint Investigative Mechanism of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations in the Syrian Arab Republic have been brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

After due consideration, the Security Council authorizes the recommendations, including elements of the terms of reference, regarding the establishment and operation of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism.

(*Signed*) Vitaly **Churkin**
President of the Security Council

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Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014)

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the nineteenth submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), paragraph 10 of Council resolution 2165 (2014) and paragraph 5 of Council resolution 2191 (2014), in which the Council requested me to report, every 30 days, on the implementation of the resolutions by all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. The information contained herein is based on the data available to the United Nations agencies on the ground, from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and from open sources. Data from United Nations agencies and partners on their humanitarian deliveries have been reported for the period from 1 June to 31 August 2015, when available. More recent data have also been included upon availability.

II. Major developments

A. Political/military

3. Widespread conflict and high levels of violence continued throughout the Syrian Arab Republic in August. Indiscriminate aerial bombings, including the use of barrel bombs, by Government forces and indiscriminate shelling by non-State armed groups, extremist and listed terrorist groups[1] resulted in the death, injury and displacement of civilians. The conduct of hostilities by all parties continued to be characterized by widespread disregard for the rules of international humanitarian law and their obligation to protect civilians.

4. In Rif Dimashq governorate, violence continued during the reporting period. Pro-Government forces, backed by Hizbullah, continued their offensive on the strategic city of Zabadani in the Qalamun area. The situation for the civilians who are still in Zabadani remained critical. In late July, more than 4,000 people originally from Zabadani were reportedly displaced to the town of Madaya from Buqayn. Similarly, approximately 2,000 people originally from Zabadani have

[1] On 30 May 2013, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Nusrah Front were designated as terrorist groups by the Security Council in accordance with resolution 1267 (1999). The two groups operate in the Syrian Arab Republic.

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reportedly been forcibly relocated since 17 August from the towns of Bludan, Insha'at, Maamoura, Dimas and Rawda Batroneh to Madaya. In addition to Zabadani, Government forces intensified bombardment and shelling on the adjacent towns of Madaya and Buqayn, causing casualties among civilians, including women and children, and exacerbating the already dire humanitarian situation in the area.

5. On 1 August, Government forces dropped barrel bombs that hit a residential building in Madaya village and reportedly killed seven civilians, five from one family, including two women and two children, and injuring at least 10 other civilians. All 17 were residents displaced from Zabadani owing to the heavy bombardment by Government forces. On 26 August, Government forces dropped barrel bombs again on Madaya, reportedly killing a displaced family of five and wounding six other civilians as well as causing substantial damage to houses. According to information received by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 46 civilians, including three women and three children, were killed because of Governmental military action in Zabadani and its surrounding areas between 2 July and 20 August.

6. Following an announcement by the Minister of National Reconciliation Affairs on the reported improvements in the security situation in Hseiniyeh in Rif Dimashq, some 10,000 people, including Palestine refugees, have returned after three years of displacement. Approximately 300 families are reportedly returning every day, with urgent needs relating to repair of shelters and rehabilitation of utilities, including water, sewage and electricity networks. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) aims to resume services, as soon as feasible, to Hseiniyeh, which had been home to nearly 30,000 Palestine refugees and Syrians.

7. All UNRWA operations in Yarmouk remained suspended during the reporting period. The most recent UNRWA mission inside Yarmouk was conducted on 28 March. On 11 August, Syrian authorities allowed access to UNRWA to provide health care to civilians in Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham. Between 18 and 31 August, the Agency conducted four missions to Yalda to provide medical services and water purification tablets. UNRWA medical teams treated 54 suspected cases of typhoid out of 1,103 patients during that time frame. Other humanitarian organizations have reportedly been allowed to continue their operations and deliver assistance in Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham. The local agreement reached in those three areas is holding and the authorities have authorized a limited range of commercial goods to enter the area on a daily basis.

8. During the reporting period, non-State armed groups continued their military offensive on Government positions in Harasta and Darayya in Rif Dimashq. At the same time, Government bombardment of areas controlled by non-State armed groups increased considerably. On 2 August, Government forces carried out an attack with heavy artillery on the town of Darayya in western Ghutah, reportedly killing three civilians from one family and wounding five others. The attack was part of the Government's ongoing military operations in Darayya. On 4 August, according to sources on the ground, Government helicopters dropped four barrel bombs on Darayya and fired surface-to-surface missiles, resulting in massive destruction of civilian infrastructure. Two days later, Government forces hit Darayya again with barrel bombs and missiles fired from helicopters and jets. Three children were reportedly killed and an unidentified number of civilians injured.

9. During the reporting period, several air raids took place in eastern Ghutah. On 12 August, Government forces carried out four air raids with missiles on the town of Duma in eastern Ghutah. The attacks hit the "Sheep Square", a popular local market and a residential area in the al-Masaken neighbourhood. As a result, at least 30 civilians were killed and approximately 150 others wounded. Four days later, on 16 August, at least 111 persons were killed and more than 200 wounded, according to local sources, by Government air raids on a local market in Duma city. My Special Envoy for Syria and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator both expressed their condemnation of the Duma market bombardment in their press statements, calling the attack unacceptable. According to OHCHR sources, between 17 and 26 August, Government forces repeatedly hit residential areas of Duma, killing at least 90 civilians, including four women and nine children, and wounding at least 289 others. Other areas of eastern Ghutah were also heavily affected by the fighting. According to local sources, Government forces repeatedly attacked Erbin in eastern Ghutah during August. For example, on 12 August, jets fired missiles that hit a residential area in the town, killing a woman and nine other civilians. From 16 to 18 August, the town was again hit, with 15 civilians killed and more than 10 wounded.

10. On 12 and 13 August, non-State armed groups attacked Government-held areas in Damascus and Rif Damashq with mortar shelling, resulting reportedly in the death of 25 civilians. Furthermore, on 23 and 24 August, non-State armed groups launched more than 170 shells on targets in Damascus and Rif Dimashq, including Adra Prison, killing at least 10 civilians and injuring more than 30 others. The following day, non-State armed groups carried out indiscriminate attacks on Damascus city using mortar shells and rockets and affecting the residential neighbourhoods of al-Qassa'a, Bab Touma, Brumana, al-Salihiya, Baghdad Street and the areas around al-Amawiyeen Square. At least 10 civilians were reportedly killed in the attacks.

11. In northern Aleppo governorate, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) intensified its offensive against non-State armed groups and seized several villages around Mare'a city. According to sources on the ground, ISIL attacked the city on 21 August with artillery shells that allegedly contained a chemical agent. Medical sources on the ground reported having treated four persons for symptoms that supported the testimony of the victims of having been exposed to a chemical agent. Non-State armed groups continued their attempts to repel the ISIL offensive on Mare'a, making slight advances. Furthermore, in Aleppo city, at least 31 civilians were reportedly killed in August as a result of attacks by Government forces, and at least 35 civilians were killed in attacks by non-State armed groups.

12. In Idlib governorate, Government forces intensified aerial attacks on areas under the control of non-State armed groups, including the Zayzoun thermal power station, reportedly rendering it non-operational. According to reports, on 3 August, a Government military plane crashed in the town of Ariha, in Idlib governorate, killing at least 16 people. On the same day, Government forces hit a residential neighbourhood in the town, killing at least 12 civilians. According to local sources, since 23 August hundreds of mortars have fallen into the two largely Shia majority villages of Foah and Kefraya, in response to the offensive by Government forces and Hizbullah on Zabadani, killing some 20 people. On 12 and 27 August, agreements were reached between the Government and non-State armed groups on 48-hour ceasefires in Zabadani in Rif Dimashq and in Foah and Kefraya, in Idlib

governorate. The second ceasefire broke down before the 48-hour mark and military operations resumed in both areas in early September.

13. In Dayr al-Zawr governorate, Government forces carried out several air strikes on 8 August on the town of Mohasan, reportedly targeting ISIL locations. As a result of the attack, a woman and a child were reportedly killed. ISIL continued to fire mortar shells on areas under Government control in the city of Dayr al-Zawr, killing civilians. For example, on 17 August, a man and a woman were killed during one such attack in the al-Jura neighbourhood.

14. From 12 to 20 August, 9,600 people were reportedly displaced from the besieged areas in Dayr al-Zawr city to Raqqah city and surrounding villages. In addition, an estimated 6,800 individuals have returned from Turkey to their homes in Suluk in rural Raqqah governorate. The returnees were reportedly given permission from the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) to return. Similarly, reports indicate that ISIL has allowed some of the Kurdish families that were recently displaced to Palmyra to return to Raqqah. So far, an estimated 11,000 people have returned to Raqqah city.

15. As a result of the escalation of fighting in Al Ghab in Hama governorate, 8,400 individuals have reportedly been displaced to the Salanfa subdistrict in Ladhiqiyah. In addition, a total of 24,600 individuals have been displaced within Hama governorate.

16. In Hasakah governorate, fighting between ISIL, Kurdish militias and Government forces resulted in the retreat of ISIL units from the southern neighbourhoods of Hasakah city. On 19 August, ISIL reportedly detonated a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device at the Asayish Building (Kurdish Security Organization) located in the al-Sina'a area in the al-Antariya neighbourhood in al-Qamishli. As a result of the attack, 13 civilians were killed and several others injured. On 20 August, fighting between YPG and ISIL reportedly led to the displacement of an estimated 1,500 people from the town of al-Bahra al-Khatwyneh towards several locations in Hasakah governorate. According to local sources, as at 30 August, the total number of returnees to Hasakah city reached 108,000 people, which represents 90 per cent of the 120,000 originally displaced people following the ISIL advances on the city in late June 2015.

17. On 5 August, in the eastern countryside of Homs, ISIL launched an attack on the cities of Qaryatayn and Hawarine. As a result of the ISIL attacks and the subsequent intensification of aerial bombardments, some 27,000 people have reportedly been displaced from Qaryatayn. Following the ISIL advances on Qaryatayn, Government forces reportedly carried out several aerial attacks on the city, including with barrel bombs and heavy artillery, killing and injuring civilians and causing substantial destruction to civilian infrastructure. Since then, nine non-State armed groups have reportedly merged and launched an offensive against Government forces positioned in the vicinity of the towns of al-Rastan and Talbiseh, successfully taking control of a number of Government positions at the entrance of the village of Tasneen. Government forces reportedly retaliated by attacking several areas, including al-Rastan and the villages of Ghornata and al-Ganto situated in the northern part of rural Homs, resulting in the death and injury of civilians. On 29 August, according to reports received by OHCHR, seven people were killed and at least 33 injured when Government forces fired a missile said to allegedly contain a chemical agent at the al-Amlas checkpoint, near al-Rastan. OHCHR sources also

reported that eight medical personnel who sought to treat the victims were also harmed by inhalation.

18. In Dar'a governorate, non-State armed groups continued their offensive to gain control of Dar'a city. Since the beginning of the offensive, a number of indiscriminate attacks have taken place by both sides. According to reports on the ground, on 14 and 15 August, 18 civilians were killed and 87 injured by the indiscriminate attacks by non-State armed groups in Dar'a city. Government forces also continued their aerial attacks in Dar'a, causing civilian deaths and injuries. The attacks targeted a number of towns and villages including Um Elmayathen Izra', al-Sura, Bisr El Harir, Al-Naseeb, Yadudeh and Sheikh Miskine. Sources indicate that at least 400 civilians, including women and children, have been killed by Government forces since the start of the offensive by non-State armed groups. Between 8 and 11 August, at least seven civilians were reportedly killed as a result of barrel bombs dropped by Government helicopters on the Dar'a camp, Zimrin and the town of al-Hara. For example, on 10 August, Government jets reportedly launched an attack on the village of Mzireb, killing three women and wounding an unknown number of civilians.

19. On 2 September, a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device reportedly detonated in Al-Hamam square in Ladhiqiyah city, killing 10 people and injuring 53 others in the first such incident in the city.

20. Civilian infrastructure continued to be affected during the reporting period. In Aleppo governorate, water cuts affected Aleppo city during the first half of August and at the end of the month, affecting up to 2 million people. The residents of Damascus were also faced with water cuts from 14 to 17 August after non-State armed groups cut off the Wadi Barada supply. On 12 August, electricity and water supplies were reportedly restored to 300,000 people in Dar'a city and the surrounding villages following cuts by non-State armed groups as of 14 and 26 July, respectively. In Idlib, reports were received on strikes by Government forces in and around nine hospitals located across the governorate, including three hospitals supported by a non-governmental organization, from 7 to 10 August, reportedly killing 11 civilians, including three hospital staff and a patient. At least 31 people were wounded in the attacks, including seven hospital staff and one patient.

21. In August, several remaining cultural heritage sites were affected by the conflict. On Tuesday, 25 August, ISIL released images purportedly showing the destruction of the ancient temple of Baal Shamin in Tadmur (Palmyra). On 18 August, according to media reports, ISIL beheaded the former chief archaeologist of Tadmur (Palmyra). I issued a press statement on 24 August condemning these barbaric acts of terror and reiterated that the perpetrators must be prosecuted. On 20 August, ISIL reportedly destroyed the Catholic monastery of Mar Elian in Qaryatayn in Homs governorate.

22. During the reporting period, negotiations continued over several local agreements between the Government and non-State armed groups. In Mu'addamiyah, a verbal agreement was reached on 18 August over the opening of the main road. In the Barzah district of Damascus, non-State armed groups blocked the road leading to Tishreen hospital, violating the local agreement in place, in response to the killing of a civilian and arresting another one at a Government checkpoint on 23 August. In Homs city, negotiations to finalize the Wa'r agreement continued between Government and local representatives. On 25 August, the Office of the

Special Envoy for Syria was informed by the parties that the agreement was near conclusion, pending agreement on the destination of fighters wanting to leave the district.

23. From 15 to 17 August, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator visited the Syrian Arab Republic for consultations with senior Government representatives and the humanitarian community in the country. The Under-Secretary-General's discussions focused on the overall strengthening of the humanitarian response across the country and the deteriorating situation on the ground. Furthermore, from 17 to 22 August, the Deputy Special Envoy for Syria visited the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey for meetings with relevant Government officials and representatives of opposition groups to discuss the establishment of thematic working groups in accordance with the Security Council presidential statement of 17 August 2015 (S/PRST/2015/15).

B. Human rights

24. During the reporting period, OHCHR continued to receive allegations and to document cases of arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and other ill-treatment, as well as death in custody inside Government detention centres. On 14 August, in Hama Central Prison, prison guards reportedly rounded up at least 50 detainees and beat them in their common cell before forcing them into a number of small cells used for solitary confinement. In response, hundreds of detainees inside the prison protested and took two guards hostage. Security forces surrounded the enclosed section of the prison where detainees were protesting and fired tear gas canisters at them. The standoff ended when the Hama Police Chief arrived and negotiated between the detainees and the security forces. The hostages were released and the 50 detainees released from solitary confinement cells.

25. In the town of Tal Shihab in Dar'a governorate, on 25 August, a family reported that its son, who had been detained for more than two years, had died in a Government detention centre, reportedly as a result of torture. Another family from Dar'a whose son had also been detained for a long period reported that he had died as a result of torture in the "Palestine Branch" detention centre.

26. Following the release on bail of three human rights defenders, Husein Gharir, Hani al-Zitani and Mazen Darwish, in July and August 2015, all charges against them were dropped by the Counter-Terrorism Court on 31 August. According to lawyers interviewed by OHCHR, tens of thousands of civilians have been referred to the Counter-Terrorism Court since 2012. As of July 2015, some 670 decisions have been issued by the Court.

27. According to local sources, on 20 August ISIL killed three men in rural Hama, reportedly for their alleged homosexual orientation.

28. In Idlib, the Nusrah Front executed at least five men and two women on 1 and 2 August in Idlib city with gunshots to the head in front of a crowd. The killings followed a summary trial on charges of theft or being informants. According to sources on the ground, two days later, a man was killed by the Nusrah Front for reportedly cooperating with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic following a summary trial. On 15 August, sources reported that elements linked to the Nusrah

Front took control of at least 60 houses belonging to displaced members of the Druze community in Jabal al-Somaq.

29. In Raqqah governorate on 4 August, approximately 10 members of YPG raided the village of Seheirijat al-Nayef, close to Tell Abyad. During the raid they arrested a 60-year-old civilian for unknown reasons. Reportedly, the civilian has been kept in al-Bawaba al-Hududiya Prison.

30. Following ISIL advances on the town of Qaryatayn in early August, at least 7,000 of the city's 50,000 residents, both Muslim and Christian, have been trapped in the city. Included among them are 47 women, 19 children and over 100 Assyrian Christians whose whereabouts remain unknown.

C. Humanitarian response

31. United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners continued to reach millions of people in need between 1 June and 31 August through all modalities from within the Syrian Arab Republic and across borders pursuant to resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). The World Food Programme (WFP) delivered food assistance for an average of 4 million people per month. The World Health Organization (WHO) distributed medicines and supplies for nearly 2 million people per month on average. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reached over 260,000 people per month on average with core relief items, as well as protection services. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) distributed agricultural supplies in support of over 6,400 people per month on average. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reached on average over 61,000 people per month with multisector assistance. UNRWA continued to provide support to up to 243,985 Palestine refugees on a monthly basis. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reached 2.5 million people per month in June and July with water, sanitation, hygiene, health, education and protection support. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) assisted its partners to deliver 755,187 reproductive health and gender-based services to people affected by the crisis in 12 governorates. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic continued to provide basic services to areas under its control and, in many cases, in areas beyond its control.

32. Cross-border deliveries continued during the reporting period. As at 31 August, the United Nations and its implementing partners had sent 174 shipments — 116 from Turkey and 58 from Jordan — to the Syrian Arab Republic under the terms of resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). These included the food assistance equivalent for nearly 2 million people; non-food items for 1.5 million people; water and sanitation supplies for nearly 1 million people; and medical supplies for some 2.4 million treatments in Aleppo, Dar'a, Hama, Idlib, Ladhiqiyah and Qunaytirah governorates. Many of the medical supplies are reusable and will benefit more patients in the next few months. In line with resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014), the United Nations notified the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in advance of each shipment, including the details of content, destination and number of beneficiaries.

33. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism continued its operations in Jordan and Turkey. During the reporting period, it monitored 49 United Nations humanitarian shipments, confirming the humanitarian nature of each and notifying

the Syrian authorities after each shipment had crossed the border. The Mechanism continued to benefit from excellent cooperation with the Governments of Jordan and Turkey.

34. During the reporting period, four joint inter-agency convoys, one of which was only partially completed, delivered assistance to over 200,000 people in June as detailed in the seventeenth report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/561, para. 32). No inter-agency convoys were completed in July and August.

35. Both international and Syrian non-governmental organizations continued to deliver multisector assistance in the Syrian Arab Republic, including the provision of ongoing services. During June and July, non-governmental organizations reached around 1.3 million people on average, including assistance to over 650,000 people in Aleppo governorate, over 190,000 people in Dar'a governorate and over 230,000 people in Idlib governorate.

Humanitarian access

36. The delivery of humanitarian assistance to many of the 12.2 million people in need of assistance in the Syrian Arab Republic remained extremely challenging in many areas owing to active conflict, insecurity, shifting front lines, and deliberate obstructions and interference by the parties, including restrictions on movements and burdensome administrative procedures.

37. Access to the 4.6 million people living in hard-to-reach areas remains of critical concern and is very limited compared with the level of need. Between 1 June and 31 August 2015, the United Nations agencies and partners reached 30 of the 127 hard-to-reach locations on average per month (24 per cent of locations). The United Nations agencies reached 15 locations with food assistance at least once for 424,000 people; 18 locations with health support for over 202,000 medical treatments; 6 locations with water, sanitation and hygiene for over 300,000 people; and 7 locations with core relief items for over 62,000 people. Of the 127 hard-to-reach locations, 80 (63 per cent) were not reached; 20 (15.7 per cent) were reached once during the past three months; 11 (8.6 per cent) have been reached twice; and 16 (13 per cent) have been reached three times. There has been no tangible improvement in the number of hard-to-reach locations accessed between June and August, compared with the two previous quarters.

38. Continued conflict in several governorates hindered the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance, as well as people's access to essential services. Conflict and insecurity prevented the delivery of life-saving food assistance to over 1.2 million people in parts of Rif Dimashq, rural Homs and rural Hama governorates. WFP remains unable to reach some 60,000 civilians in Ariha and Jisr al-Shughur in Idlib governorate because of sustained levels of fighting.

39. Deliberate interference and restrictions also continued to prevent aid delivery. WFP was unable to conduct deliveries to 600,000 people in Dayr al-Zawr and ISIL-controlled areas of Raqqah (with the exception of Tell Abyad), where access has been impossible since May and November 2014, respectively. Owing to safety concerns, since September 2014, WFP has suspended its plans to deliver assistance to 175,000 people in ISIL-controlled areas of rural Aleppo, including Al Bab, Mambej, Jarablus and Deir Hafer.

40. United Nations agencies continued to use the Nusaybin/Qamishly crossing with the consent of the Governments of Turkey and the Syrian Arab Republic during the reporting period. WFP completed the transportation of food rations sufficient for 251,170 people in June, and 240,000 people in August. UNHCR delivered non-food items for 25,000 people through the crossing in August. UNICEF completed airlifting 50 tons of medical, nutrition, water and hygiene supplies to Qamishli to cover the needs of 80,000 people in June, including the displaced families from Hasakah city. WFP could not transport any food assistance in July as a result of delays in receiving approvals from the Syrian authorities, as well as the temporary closure of the crossing from 28 July to 4 August owing to the difficulties related to the increased insecurity in the north-eastern Syrian Arab Republic.

41. As at 31 August, out of 81 total inter-agency requests, 20 requests have been approved in principle by the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 45 requests are awaiting approval and 3 requests have been put on hold by the United Nations because of insecurity. The remaining 13 requests are those that were previously submitted but then overtaken by newer requests. Nine of the original requests were held by the United Nations for reasons of insecurity and four were not answered by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic within a three-month time period. Out of the 20 requests approved in principle, 9 have been completed and 1 has been partially completed. The second part of the convoy to Bludan has been unable to go ahead owing to lack of security approval. Of the remaining 10 requests approved in principle, 2 (Arbin and Zamalka) have been held up because of a lack of agreement between the United Nations, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the Government, as the access route approved by the latter was considered unsafe by the United Nations. Planned convoys to Nubul and Zahra' and Afrin in Aleppo, and to Foah and Kefrayah in Idlib, are stalled by the lack of approval by non-State armed groups for safe passage. The Dayr al-Zawr airlift remains pending the improvements in the security situation at the Dyar al-Zawr airport to enable the carrier to move ahead with the shipment. The convoys approved in principle by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Mu'addamiyah, Rif Dimashq and Harbnasfah in Hama have been unable to go owing to the lack of approval from the Syrian Government security forces. The convoy to Hula in Hama governorate was deployed on 1 September but was unable to proceed to its destination because of demonstrations along the route. The convoy will be rescheduled as soon as possible. The remaining two requests approved in principle are at various stages of preparation. On 13 August, the United Nations renewed its request to deliver humanitarian assistance to Zabadani (Rif Dimashq) and Foah and Kefrayah (Idlib) in view of the ceasefire negotiations. While the Government did not approve the request for Zabadani, an approval was received for deliveries to Foah and Kefrayah.

42. No major changes in the administrative procedures required by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic were reported over the last three months, although reports from UNICEF indicate that there have been improvements on the reduction of the time needed to obtain approvals to import humanitarian supplies. The current administrative procedures continued to delay or limit the delivery of assistance by United Nations agencies and their partners.

43. As at 30 August, 21 United Nations visa requests (either new visas or renewals) remained pending. As at 9 September, 9 of the requests are within the 15 working days' limit, 10 have exceeded the limit and 2 have been approved. In August, the Syrian Arab Republic approved 109 visa requests, of which 51 are new

and 58 renewals. This represents a marked improvement over the month of July, during which there were 65 approved visa requests, 23 new visas and 42 renewals. One visa was rejected in August; the total number of visas rejected in 2015 is 39, exclusive of the four United Nations staff who were declared personae non gratae in February. This compares with 28 visa rejections in all of 2014. However, five of those rejections have been reversed and the visa requests were approved.

44. The number of national non-governmental organizations authorized to partner with United Nations organizations increased from 118 (173 branches) on 1 June to 131 (214 branches) on 27 August 2015.

Besieged areas

45. Siege remains a pervasive tactic of war in the Syrian Arab Republic. Of the 4.6 million people living in hard-to-reach areas, 422,000 remained besieged: 167,500 people were besieged by Government forces in eastern Ghutah and Darayya, 26,500 were besieged by non-State armed groups in Nubul and Zahra', and 228,000 were besieged by ISIL in the Government-controlled western neighbourhoods of Dayr al-Zawr city.

46. The parties to the conflict continued to heavily restrict access to besieged areas during the reporting period. Between 1 June and 31 August, the United Nations and its partners reached an average of 9 per cent of people per month in besieged areas with health assistance, compared with 2 per cent in the previous three months. No food or humanitarian relief items reached any besieged area through official routes during the reporting period, compared with 1.4 per cent in the preceding three months. The flow of commercial supplies through official routes remained largely blocked, leading to high prices for those commodities reaching besieged areas through unofficial and irregular supply lines. Freedom of movement remained heavily restricted, although certain groups, such as students, civil servants and members of reconciliation councils, were occasionally allowed to leave and return to besieged areas.

47. In eastern Ghutah, some 163,500 people remain besieged by Government forces. Some United Nations assistance reached besieged locations in eastern Ghutah during the reporting period. In June, UNFPA assisted, through a local partner, 1,365 women in Duma with reproductive health services. In July, UNICEF delivered, through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, medicines, paediatric kits and nutrition supplements for 5,000 children to Duma, and UNFPA provided health assistance for 750 people through a local partner. Between June and August, WHO delivered, through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, over 80,000 medical treatments, including medicines to curb the myiasis outbreak in August, 500 renal failure sessions, 20 cholera test kits and 7,500 syringes for routine immunization.

48. In Darayya, Rif Dimashq, about 4,000 people remain besieged by Government forces. No United Nations assistance reached the areas during the reporting period. People in Darayya have not been assisted by the United Nations since October 2012.

49. In Nubul and Zahra', some 26,500 people remain besieged by non-State armed groups. In July and August, WHO delivered psychotropic medicine for 5,409 treatments to Nubul through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. Over the past couple of months, there have been consistent and credible reports that access to and from the enclave for both commercial goods and people had improved.

50. In the Government-controlled western neighbourhoods of Dayr al-Zawr city, some 228,000 people are besieged by ISIL. In June, UNICEF, through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, assisted 1,764 children with measles and other routine vaccinations. Between June and August, WHO airlifted medicines and medical supplies sufficient for 40,289 treatments, and provided through its implementing partners medical assistance for 1,116 treatments in Dayr al-Zawr city and the town of Alboukamal.

Free passage of medical supplies, personnel and equipment

51. Access to medical supplies and equipment continued to be restricted from some areas as a result of insecurity and access constraints by parties to the conflict. The deterioration in the security situation in many parts of the country has resulted in increases in the prices of medicines and pharmaceutical supplies and a shortage of medical supplies in local markets. The availability of life-saving health services, in particular in parts of the governorates of Hasakah, Aleppo, Idlib, Hama, Dar'a and Rif Dimashq, was also hampered. No surgical items were allowed into areas controlled by non-State armed groups during the reporting period from inside the Syrian Arab Republic. WHO transported eight surgical kits via a cross-border convoy from Jordan in July. WHO requests to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to send medicines and medical supplies to six locations in Damascus, Rif Dimashq, Aleppo and Idlib governorates remain pending, as well as two requests to send trauma and surgical supplies to Duma in Rif Dimashq and an airlift to Hasakah.

Safety and security of staff and premises

52. Between 22 and 24 August, rocket and mortar attacks on Damascus hit houses of two UNHCR staff members. The staff and their families were unharmed.

53. In August, a WFP truck carrying 1,000 bags of rice in Aleppo was set on fire after being hit by shrapnel, destroying the truck and all commodities.

54. On 30 July, a stray bullet hit the house of a UNHCR national staff member in the Koussour neighbourhood in Damascus, breaking a window but causing no physical injuries.

55. A total of 34 United Nations staff members, 28 of whom are from UNRWA, 1 from the United Nations Development Programme, 3 from UNHCR and 2 from UNICEF, continue to be detained or missing. The total number of humanitarian workers killed in the conflict since March 2011 is 79: 17 United Nations staff members, 46 Syrian Arab Red Crescent staff members and volunteers, 8 volunteers and staff members of the Palestine Red Crescent Society and 8 staff members of international non-governmental organizations. Of the 79, 12 have been killed since 1 January 2015.

III. Observations

56. There has been no reduction in the appalling patterns of violations of international humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict, with devastating consequences for the people of the Syrian Arab Republic. I am extremely concerned about the reports that the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic continues to

conduct indiscriminate attacks on populated areas and civilians, including with barrel bombs that have destroyed entire neighbourhoods. I am also deeply concerned by the indiscriminate use of mortars and shelling of residential neighbourhoods by non-State armed groups. These attacks must stop immediately. I once again remind all the parties to the conflict that the deliberate targeting of civilians is a war crime and those responsible need to be held to account.

57. The continuous violations of human rights by all the parties to the conflict remain of the highest concern. While I welcome the recent release of the three human rights defenders, this represents just the tip of the iceberg of all the other pending cases. Activists, lawyers and human rights defenders continue to be held in custody without a due judicial process and are often held in appalling conditions. I also condemn in the strongest possible way the targeting and the brutal killing of people based on their sexual orientation by non-State armed groups and designated terrorist groups such as ISIL. Such abhorrent acts are signs of a total disregard for basic human rights and must be stopped immediately. I urge the Government and the non-State armed groups to respect the basic rights of freedom of speech and expression.

58. I remain deeply concerned about the deliberate targeting of basic infrastructure and essential services across the Syrian Arab Republic. The cutting of water supplies and electricity in large population centres, such as Aleppo and Damascus, by non-State armed groups and designated terrorist groups is simply unacceptable and must stop immediately. Water and other essential services cannot be used as weapons of war. The recent water cuts in Aleppo, during the hottest time of the year, have resulted in a substantial increase in reports of water-borne diseases, with increasingly limited options for treatment, as many health centres and hospitals have been destroyed during the conflict. Women, children and the elderly — the most vulnerable groups of the Syrian society — have borne the brunt of the actions of the different parties to the conflict.

59. With the recent escalation of violence, and the continued rise of extremism in some parts of the country, I repeat my strong calls on all in the region and beyond to stop the flow of arms and fighters to all parties in the Syrian Arab Republic. Governments with influence need to do everything in their power to stop those from outside the Syrian Arab Republic from entering the country and taking up arms, as well as to prevent terrorist groups from acquiring financial resources, weapons and other supplies, in line with relevant Security Council resolutions.

60. Humanitarian agencies in the Syrian Arab Republic continue to do their utmost to reach the millions of men, women and children in need of life-saving assistance across the country despite the many access challenges. This assistance is delivered at great personal risk, particularly by Syrian organizations and volunteers who are often the first responders in an increasingly fragmented, volatile and dangerous environment. At a time when we should be scaling up, the United Nations agencies and their partners are forced to cut back operations owing to a lack of funds. I strongly appeal to donors to urgently provide additional funding so that we can continue our response efforts.

61. The crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic is devastating the lives of the Syrian people. More and more people have had to leave their homes in a desperate search for safety, and many feel that they have no other option but to risk the perilous journey across the Mediterranean in the hope of a better future for them and their

children. I once again urge the Security Council to take urgent action to end this crisis in the face of the deepening suffering of the Syrian people. There is no military solution to this crisis. What the Syrian Arab Republic desperately needs is a political solution that addresses the underlying causes of the conflict. I call on all the Syrian parties, and concerned regional and international Member States, to support fully the earliest implementation of the United Nations initiative to establish the intra-Syrian thematic working groups to operationalize the Geneva communiqué, which was supported by the Security Council in its presidential statement of 17 August 2015. Lack of action will result in further suffering and is depriving an entire generation in the Syrian Arab Republic of its right to a peaceful and prosperous future.

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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 29 May to 28 August 2015

I. Introduction

1. The present report gives an account of the activities of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) during the past three months, pursuant to the mandate contained in Security Council resolution 350 (1974) and extended in subsequent resolutions, most recently resolution 2229 (2015).

II. Situation in the area and activities of the Force

2. During the reporting period, the ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic generally was maintained, albeit in a continuously volatile environment attributable to the ongoing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and notwithstanding a number of significant violations of the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces (Disengagement of Forces Agreement) of 1974, which are set out below. The Syrian armed forces carried out military activities and security operations against armed groups, often in response to offensives carried out by the armed groups in the area of separation and the area of limitation on the Bravo side. Inside the area of separation, the presence of the Syrian armed forces and military equipment, as well as any other armed personnel and military equipment other than that of UNDOF, is in violation of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. As underscored by the Security Council in its resolution 2229 (2015), there should be no military activity of any kind in the area of separation.

3. A number of significant incidents occurred across the ceasefire line in violation of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. On 13 June, United Nations personnel at observation post 51 observed nine rockets being fired from locations in the vicinity of Um Batinah and Mashara in the area of separation. The rockets landed in the area south of the observation post, with at least two landing west of the ceasefire line. The following night, on 14 June, four rockets were fired from a location in Mashara, three of which landed across the ceasefire line. On 3 August, United Nations personnel at the UNDOF operational base, Camp Ziouani, heard two heavy explosions from a north-western direction. The following day, an Observer Group Golan investigation team confirmed that at least one rocket had landed on the Alpha side, approximately one and a half kilometres from Camp Ziouani. The

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results of the investigation suggested that the round was fired from the Bravo side. Syrian authorities subsequently informed UNDOF that a Palestinian "terrorist cell" had been responsible for the rockets fired across the ceasefire line on 3 August.

4. In the early evening of 20 August, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) informed UNDOF that the Israel Defense Forces had conveyed to UNIFIL that two rockets had been launched from the Bravo side of the UNDOF area of operations across the ceasefire line with the Syrian Arab Republic into northern Israel, impacting in the vicinity of Qiryat Shmona. Shortly thereafter, at approximately 1830 hours, the Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that two rockets fired by Palestinian Islamic Jihad from new Quneitra had impacted in the vicinity of Qiryat Shmona. Approximately one hour later, UNDOF personnel on the Alpha side heard three rockets launched from the north of Camp Ziouani, and United Nations personnel at position 22 observed one rocket fired from an Israel Defense Forces position in their vicinity. UNDOF personnel also observed a rocket fired from the Alpha side moving in an easterly direction towards the Bravo side. At the same time, United Nations personnel at observation post 51 observed two projectiles impacting in the vicinity of Al Ba'ath. On 20 August, at 2330 hours, UNDOF personnel observed six heavy explosions in the area of separation, approximately 10 kilometres east of Buq'ata, followed by a series of continual anti-aircraft gunfire from Khan Arnabah and Al Ba'ath. Shortly thereafter, UNDOF personnel in observation post 51 heard a helicopter overhead and observed firing in Khan Arnabah and Al Ba'ath in the central part of the area of separation, while at the same time UNDOF personnel at United Nations position Hermon South and at observation post 51 observed nine heavy explosions in Khan Arnabah. On the morning of 21 August, the Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that it had fired at a Palestinian Islamic Jihad position near new Quneitra in the area of separation in response to the 20 August attack and to pre-empt further attacks. UNDOF was not in a position to observe the alleged rocket firing from the Bravo side or ascertain the points of origin or impact of the rockets. The Syrian armed forces informed UNDOF that the rockets had not been fired from their positions. The Senior Syrian Arab Delegate informed UNDOF that an Israel Defense Forces air strike had targeted the headquarters of a Syrian armed forces brigade in Sa'sa'. Throughout these developments, the Force Commander remained in contact with the Syrian authorities and the Israel Defense Forces urging them to exercise maximum restraint and prevent escalation of the situation.

5. In addition, on 13 and 14 June, 6 July and 3 and 17 August, six incidents of firing across the ceasefire line, including with heavy machine guns, anti-aircraft machine guns and small arms, occurred as a result of the clashes on the Bravo side. In the course of the fighting, several rounds of machine gun and small arms fire impacted across the ceasefire line.

6. Crossing of the ceasefire line by civilians, primarily shepherds, was observed on an almost daily basis. On at least five occasions in June, United Nations personnel at observation post 54 observed interactions between persons from the Bravo side and the Israel Defense Forces at an Israeli technical fence gate, including the transfer of persons, mainly on stretchers, from the Bravo to the Alpha side and from the Alpha to the Bravo side. In addition, on 12 June, United Nations personnel at observation post 73 observed an Israel Defense Forces patrol on the Alpha side accompanied by two armoured personnel carriers and a bulldozer. The Israel Defense Forces patrol met with a small group of armed persons from the Bravo side

west of the ceasefire line. Following the meeting, the Israel Defense Forces personnel, along with the armoured personnel carriers and bulldozer, moved south, after which the UNDOF personnel lost sight of them.

7. In employing its best efforts to maintain the ceasefire and see that it is scrupulously observed, as prescribed by the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, UNDOF reports all breaches of the ceasefire line. UNDOF protested all firing across the ceasefire line to the Senior Syrian Arab Delegate and the Israel Defense Forces. All incidents of firing into the area of separation and across the ceasefire line, as well as the crossing by individuals of the ceasefire line, are violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. In his regular interactions with both sides, the Force Commander continued to call upon both parties to the Disengagement Agreement to exercise utmost restraint and prevent an escalation of the situation across the ceasefire line.

8. UNDOF observed and reported almost daily instances of transborder movements of unidentified individuals, some of whom were armed and observed firing occasionally at positions of the Syrian armed forces, between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic in the northern part of the area of separation.

9. In the context of the Syrian conflict, after several months of relative quiet in the northern parts of the areas of separation and limitation, intense fighting erupted during the reporting period in Hadar, straddling the Bravo line, Jabbata, in the area of separation, and Bayt Jinn, in the area of limitation. Armed groups attacked positions of the Syrian armed forces to the east and north-east of Hadar. On 16 June, armed groups operating in the Bayt Jinn enclave broke out of that area towards the west and south-west in an apparent effort to link up with armed groups in Jabbata in the area of separation. Initially, the armed groups took over positions of the Syrian armed forces on a hill that dominates the surrounding terrain, 2 kilometres north-east of Hadar. The attack was supported with indirect mortar fire by armed groups operating in the central part of the area of separation, south-west of Khan Arnabah. In the days following the attack, Syrian armed forces engaged armed groups with heavy artillery fire and air strikes as the armed groups approached their positions from both the north and the south, in the vicinity of vacated United Nations position 31, near a road junction linking Bayt Jinn with Jabbata. Clashes continued between Syrian armed forces and armed groups to gain control of the hill situated north-east of Hadar. From 19 to 21 June, UNDOF observed at least 27 air strikes conducted by Syrian armed forces in the northern and central parts of the areas of separation and limitation, primarily around the village of Hadar. Syrian armed forces maintained their positions and retain control of the road network leading north-east to Bayt Jinn. On a number of occasions during July and August, armed groups attacked positions of the Syrian armed forces in the northern parts of the areas of separation and limitation. Syrian armed forces continued to engage in direct and indirect fire to contain armed groups in Jabbata, Trunje and Ufaniyah in the area of separation and in Bayt Jinn, Mazra'at Bayt Jinn and Mughur al-Mir in the area of limitation.

10. On 22 August, United Nations personnel at position Hermon Hotel observed a group of five armed elements open fire on a Syrian armed forces patrol on Mount Hermon in the northern part of the area of separation. Two Syrian armed forces personnel were injured and three were detained by the armed group. United Nations personnel at position Hermon Base observed the armed elements taking the detained

Syrian armed forces personnel towards the direction of Shab'a in Lebanon, leaving the injured two on the scene, who were later evacuated by the Syrian armed forces.

11. In the central part of the areas of separation and limitation, the situation remained largely unchanged. UNDOF observed intermittent exchanges of artillery, mortar and heavy machine gun fire. During the clashes that occurred around Hadar, on 17 June, armed groups launched simultaneous attacks targeting Tal al-Kurum in the area of separation and Tal ash Shar, Tal al Bassaq and the town of Jaba in the area of limitation, using direct and indirect fire. The attacks were repelled by Syrian armed forces.

12. Armed groups continued to exercise control of most of the southern parts of the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side. The Syrian armed forces targeted with artillery fire locations along the front line between them and armed groups in Mashara, Kafr Nasij, Kafr Shams, Al Harrah, Zamrin and Simlin. On 3 June, UNDOF observed air strikes north-west of AlMuallaqah along the Bravo line. In the southern part of the area of limitation, UNDOF observed intermittent clashes in the vicinity of Al Magles, Abu Hasar, Lurkasi, Ain Dhakar, Tasil, Ash Shajarah and Ain Nafiah. Although the United Nations does not have the means to verify reports independently, several sources indicated that fighting continued between the coalition led by Jabhat al-Nusra, a listed terrorist group and an affiliate of Al-Qaida, and the Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade, which reportedly has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant group.

13. As a reaction to the intense fighting in and around Hadar, which is a village populated by members of the Druze community on the Bravo side, Druze residents on the Alpha side organized several demonstrations related to the perception of an increased threat to the Druze population on the Bravo side. The demonstrations took place on 15 and 16 June in Majdal Chams on the Alpha side, an area close to United Nations observation post 73. During the demonstrations on 16 June, approximately 50 vehicles and an estimated 300 demonstrators blocked the gate to United Nations observation post 73. United Nations personnel were not the target of the demonstrators. During the demonstrations of the Druze residents on the Alpha side on 22 June in the vicinity of Majdal Chams, a group of Druze attacked an Israeli military ambulance, which, on the basis of information provided by the Israel Defense Forces, was transporting two wounded combatants from the Bravo side. The demonstrators extracted the wounded from the ambulance and beat them, killing one individual and critically injuring the other. An Israel Defense Forces soldier was also injured during the incident.

14. Several incidents that jeopardized United Nations personnel and facilities occurred. On 13 and 17 June, United Nations personnel at observation post 51 took shelter on five occasions as a result of several rounds of fire having landed close to the observation post, some of which also crossed the ceasefire line. There was no injury to personnel and no damage to property at the post. On 14 June, armed individuals fired 12 rounds of gunfire in the direction of six UNDOF personnel on foot patrol in the Mount Hermon area, 3 of which landed close to the UNDOF patrol. A reinforcement team was dispatched immediately to assist and recover the patrol under fire. The incident did not result in injury to personnel or damage to United Nations property. The investigation into the incident was unable to verify the identity of the perpetrators. On two occasions during the reporting period, the Sheraton Hotel in Damascus, which houses the temporary headquarters of UNDOF

and accommodates international staff members, came under mortar fire. On 27 July, three mortars exploded in the parking area of the hotel, causing extensive material damage to three UNDOF vehicles. No United Nations personnel were wounded. All staff in the temporary headquarters remained in the designated shelter of the hotel for one hour. On 3 August, one mortar hit the hotel compound without causing injuries to any person or damage to United Nations property. Following the incidents of 27 July and 3 August, the Sheraton Hotel in Damascus was assessed to be a very high risk location. As a consequence, UNDOF is undertaking a programme criticality review of the functions carried out at its headquarters and representational office in Damascus and identifying options for relocation. UNDOF continues to conduct regular security assessments of its locations to mitigate threats to the safety and security of its personnel.

15. On 2 June, in two separate incidents, UNDOF observed stolen United Nations armoured vehicles with scratched but visible United Nations markings in the area of limitation on the Bravo side. One of the vehicles was seen moving between Sayda and Brudjum, and the other was seen in Ghadir al-Bustan.

16. During the reporting period, the Syrian armed forces maintained their positions in the area of separation, particularly around the urban centres of Al Baath and Khan Arnabah and the latter's southern approaches, as well as in the area of Al Wisiyah in the area of limitation, along the main road connecting Quneitra to Damascus. Additional Syrian armed forces weapons, armoured vehicles and artillery weapons were observed in the surroundings of Hadar. The Syrian armed forces generally deployed six tanks in the area of separation, including at their position at Tal al-Kurum, and several others at locations immediately adjacent to the area of separation. During the fighting around Hadar on 4 August, UNDOF observed one tank operating east of United Nations observation post 73, within the area of separation. On 17 June, during the attack targeting locations south of Khan Arnabah, armed groups were seen using at least two tanks in Um Batinah in the area of limitation and five artillery guns that were deployed in Ruihinah. Units of Syrian armed forces were seen using areas around the temporarily vacated United Nations position 10 and observation post 71 as firing and observation positions.

17. UNDOF protested the presence of Syrian armed forces and equipment in the area of separation and the firing into and inside the area of separation. The Force Commander reiterated to the Syrian authorities the obligation of the Syrian armed forces to halt military operations in the area of separation and to cease firing from the area of limitation, stressing the importance of abiding by the terms of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and ensuring the safety and security of United Nations personnel on the ground.

18. On several occasions during the reporting period, UNDOF observed armed and unarmed persons digging out and removing landmines from around United Nations position 80 in the vicinity of the ceasefire line. On 19 July, United Nations personnel at observation post 73 observed an explosion of an anti-personnel mine close to the observation post. Prior to the explosion, two shepherds and a flock of sheep were seen in the vicinity. After the explosion, the shepherds were observed to be unharmed.

19. During the reporting period, UNDOF observed up to six different locations where tents had been set up for internally displaced persons in the area of separation. UNDOF observed around 75 tents north-west of Al Aishah village,

straddling the ceasefire line. Between 20 and 30 persons were observed in the camp on a regular basis. Three tents were observed in the vicinity of Al Asbah and, sporadically, UNDOF personnel observed persons present in the camp. In the village of Kudnaa in the area of limitation, six tents were observed. Another five tents were seen in an area along the ceasefire line opposite the village of Braika. Further south, 17 tents were observed. Between 10 and 15 tents were observed at a location straddling the Bravo line north-west of the village of Ain Kadi. No individuals were observed at those tented camps. Owing to the closure of the established crossing between the Alpha and Bravo sides since late August 2014, UNDOF is not currently in a position to facilitate, in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, humanitarian crossings, including for students, between the Alpha and the Bravo sides.

20. In its current configuration, UNDOF has continued to carry out its mandate by maintaining visibility, albeit limited, of the area of separation and the ceasefire line from a number of positions it continues to hold in the area of separation. The Force continued to maintain four positions on Mount Hermon in the northern part of the area of separation and position 80 in the southern part, as well as position 22 on the Alpha side. UNDOF regularly conducted daily foot and vehicle patrols on Mount Hermon. UNDOF operations continued to be supported by the military observers in Observer Group Golan of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), who maintained five fixed and four temporary observation posts on the Alpha side. The focus of the activities of Observer Group Golan remained on around-the-clock static observation, investigations and situational analysis. Through Observer Group Golan, UNDOF continued to carry out fortnightly inspections of equipment and force levels in the area of limitation on the Alpha side. Liaison officers from the Alpha side accompanied Observer Group Golan inspection teams. Inspections and mobile operations in the area of limitation on the Bravo side remained suspended because of the security situation. As in the past, the Force faced restrictions on freedom of movement, and its inspection teams were denied access to some positions on the Alpha side.

21. During the reporting period, United Nations personnel observed 155 mm artillery weapons on numerous occasions on the Alpha side within 10 kilometres of the ceasefire line, in positions and on flatbed trucks. On 27 and 30 July, one multiple-launch rocket system was observed being transported on a flatbed truck. On 23 and 24 August, United Nations personnel observed an Iron Dome defence system deployed at an Israel Defense Forces position on the Alpha side within 10 kilometres of the ceasefire line. Observer Group Golan members continued to experience restrictions of movement on the Alpha side related to delays by the Israel Defense Forces in opening the technical fence gate when military observers enter and exit United Nations observation posts 54 and 73, which are located east of the Israeli technical fence. Access to United Nations observation posts from the Alpha side, however, has improved since my last report. Of particular note, access to observation post 73 is now granted on a daily basis, as required, although limited to two gate openings per day. UNDOF peacekeepers remained deployed at observation posts 54 and 73 to enhance protection of the military observers.

22. Since the temporary relocation of UNDOF from a number of its positions on the Bravo side in September 2014, UNDOF, in consultation with the parties, continued to review the situation in the area of separation. The ultimate goal of UNDOF is to return fully to the area of separation when the situation permits. In

this connection, UNDOF assessed that the prevailing security situation in the area of separation was not currently conducive to such a return. Planning on the basis of the prevailing security developments in the area of separation and area of limitation on the Bravo side and taking into consideration the financial and personnel resources required, UNDOF remained focused on maintaining its operational effectiveness to support and maintain the Force in its current configuration. UNDOF is in the process of strengthening its positions and presence in the Mount Hermon area. In an effort to enhance the ability of the Force to sustain the Mount Hermon positions, UNDOF commenced the expansion of position 12 and the development of position 12A. The Force reserve company, the heavy equipment platoon and other contingents were deployed to support the construction of position 12A and clear the site. Once the extension work has been completed, the positions will accommodate an additional 50 troops. This will facilitate the sustainment of the Mount Hermon complex during the winter.

23. In the meantime, UNDOF continued to engage the parties on practical arrangements to be put in place to establish an interim configuration of the Force that would allow it to continue to maintain the ceasefire, monitor, verify and report on violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and exercise its critical liaison functions with the parties in order to implement its mandate until the Force can return fully to the area of separation. Discussions with both parties continued with respect to agreeing on procedures for UNDOF personnel crossing between the Alpha and the Bravo sides in the absence of an established crossing at Quneitra. UNDOF also continued to engage with the parties on the use of technology to offset the lack of situational awareness in the area of separation. In addition, discussions with the Alpha side continued with respect to additional locations required to establish temporary United Nations positions for observing the ceasefire line from the Alpha side.

24. UNDOF continued to resupply its positions on Mount Hermon from Damascus. UNDOF convoys between Damascus and the Mount Hermon positions are conducted on an almost daily basis in armoured vehicles and with an UNDOF security escort, accompanied by a liaison officer from the office of the Senior Syrian Arab Delegate. UNDOF continued to carry out contingency planning for the reinforcement and evacuation of United Nations positions and observation posts and to update its contingency planning for the relocation and evacuation of United Nations personnel on both the Alpha and Bravo sides and in Damascus. UNDOF, through its Force reserve company, conducted regular exercises and training. The company remains at two UNDOF locations, Camp Ziouani and position 80.

25. The implementation of risk mitigation measures continued at observation posts, positions, the operational base at Camp Ziouani and the temporary headquarters in Damascus. A new reinforced roof was placed at observation post 54. Additional sand-filled gabions were placed at various locations at Camp Ziouani and positions 12 and 80. At position 12, two protected posts were added along the perimeter wall. At Camp Ziouani, shatter-resistant film was applied to windows exposed to the area of separation. At the temporary headquarters of UNDOF in Damascus, mitigation measures were put in place to reinforce security doors and access control at the entrance to the offices and accommodation. After the mortar incidents of 27 July and 3 August, additional precautionary procedures were put in place to reduce the exposure of United Nations personnel. Movement of UNDOF personnel on the Bravo side remains limited.

26. As at 26 August, UNDOF comprised 799 troops, including 24 women, from Bhutan (1), the Czech Republic (3), Fiji (300), India (192), Ireland (141), Nepal (160) and the Netherlands (2). In addition, 69 military observers from UNTSO, including 3 women, assisted the Force in carrying out its tasks.

III. Implementation of Security Council resolution 338 (1973)

27. The Security Council, when deciding in its resolution 2229 (2015) to renew the mandate of UNDOF for a further period of six months, until 31 December 2015, called upon the parties concerned to immediately implement its resolution 338 (1973) and requested the Secretary-General to submit, every 90 days, a report on developments in the situation and the measures taken to implement that resolution. The search for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, in particular the efforts made at various levels to implement resolution 338 (1973), was dealt with in my report on the situation in the Middle East (A/70/353), submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 69/24 on Jerusalem and 69/25 on the Syrian Golan.

28. Since the discontinuation of indirect peace talks in December 2008, there have been no negotiations between the parties. The Syrian conflict is further reducing the prospects for their resumption and progress towards peace between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic. I look forward to a peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and the resumption of efforts towards a comprehensive, just and durable peace settlement, as called for by the Security Council in its resolution 338 (1973) and other relevant resolutions.

IV. Observations

29. I note with concern the serious violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement that have taken place. The firing of rockets and gunfire from the Bravo side and the Israel Defense Forces rocket fire and air strikes across the ceasefire line jeopardize the long-term ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic. The developments of 13 and 14 June and 20 August across the ceasefire line are of deep concern. Significantly, the alleged rocket fire into Israel on 20 August would be the first such strike from the Syrian Arab Republic into Israel since the conclusion of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. It remains critical that the parties maintain liaison with UNDOF in the first instance to prevent any escalation of the situation across the ceasefire line. The mandate of UNDOF remains an important element in ensuring the stability of the region. For its part, the United Nations will spare no effort in ensuring that the long-held ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic continues to hold.

30. I am gravely concerned about the continuing deterioration of the security situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, its impact on the Syrian population and its potential implications for the stability of the region. These developments have continued to significantly affect the UNDOF area of operations. The presence of the Syrian armed forces and unauthorized military equipment in the area of separation are grave violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. The increased use of heavy weapons by both the Syrian armed forces and armed groups in the continuing Syrian conflict, including the use of air power by government forces in the area of limitation on the Bravo side, is disturbing. Armed opposition groups and

other armed groups continue to maintain control over significant sections of the areas of separation and limitation in the southern part of the UNDOF area of operations and remain present along the section of the main road connecting the two UNDOF camps. The established crossing between the Alpha and the Bravo sides remains closed.

31. There should be no military forces in the area of separation other than those of UNDOF. I note with concern the increasing presence and use of tanks and heavy weapons by the Syrian armed forces and armed groups in the area of separation. I urge the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to stop the use of air strikes. I call upon all parties to the Syrian conflict to cease military actions throughout the country, including in the UNDOF area of operations, and remove all military equipment, Syrian armed forces personnel and armed personnel from the area of separation. I urge the Israel Defense Forces to stop carrying out air strikes across the ceasefire line. The continued presence of unauthorized weapons and equipment in the area of limitation on the Alpha side is of concern.

32. I call upon countries with influence to strongly and urgently convey to the armed groups in the UNDOF area of operations the need to cease any actions in violation of the Disengagement Agreement between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic that jeopardize the safety and security of United Nations personnel and to accord United Nations personnel the freedom to carry out their mandate safely and securely. I remain concerned about the incidents that have jeopardized United National personnel and facilities. Any hostile act against United Nations personnel, including threatening their physical safety, restricting their movement and direct and indirect firing at United Nations personnel and facilities by anyone, is unacceptable. The safety and security of United Nations personnel must be ensured. I reiterate that all military activities in the area of separation conducted by any actor pose a risk to the ceasefire and to the local civilian population, in addition to the United Nations personnel on the ground. I call upon all parties to take all measures necessary to protect civilians.

33. The primary responsibility for the safety and security of United Nations personnel in the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side rests with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

34. The continued presence of UNDOF in the area remains essential. Both Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic have stated their continued commitment to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and the presence of UNDOF. I call upon both parties to actively assist UNDOF in achieving its interim configuration in structure and deployment as quickly as possible to ensure that the mission is in a position to effectively implement its mandate, until such time as the security situation allows the Force to return fully to the area of separation. I note the assistance provided by the Governments of Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic in facilitating the provision of essential supplies in support of the Force. The full return of UNDOF to the area of separation remains a priority for the mission. In planning and preparing for this full return, the safety and security of United Nations personnel remains the primary consideration in determining the exact modalities.

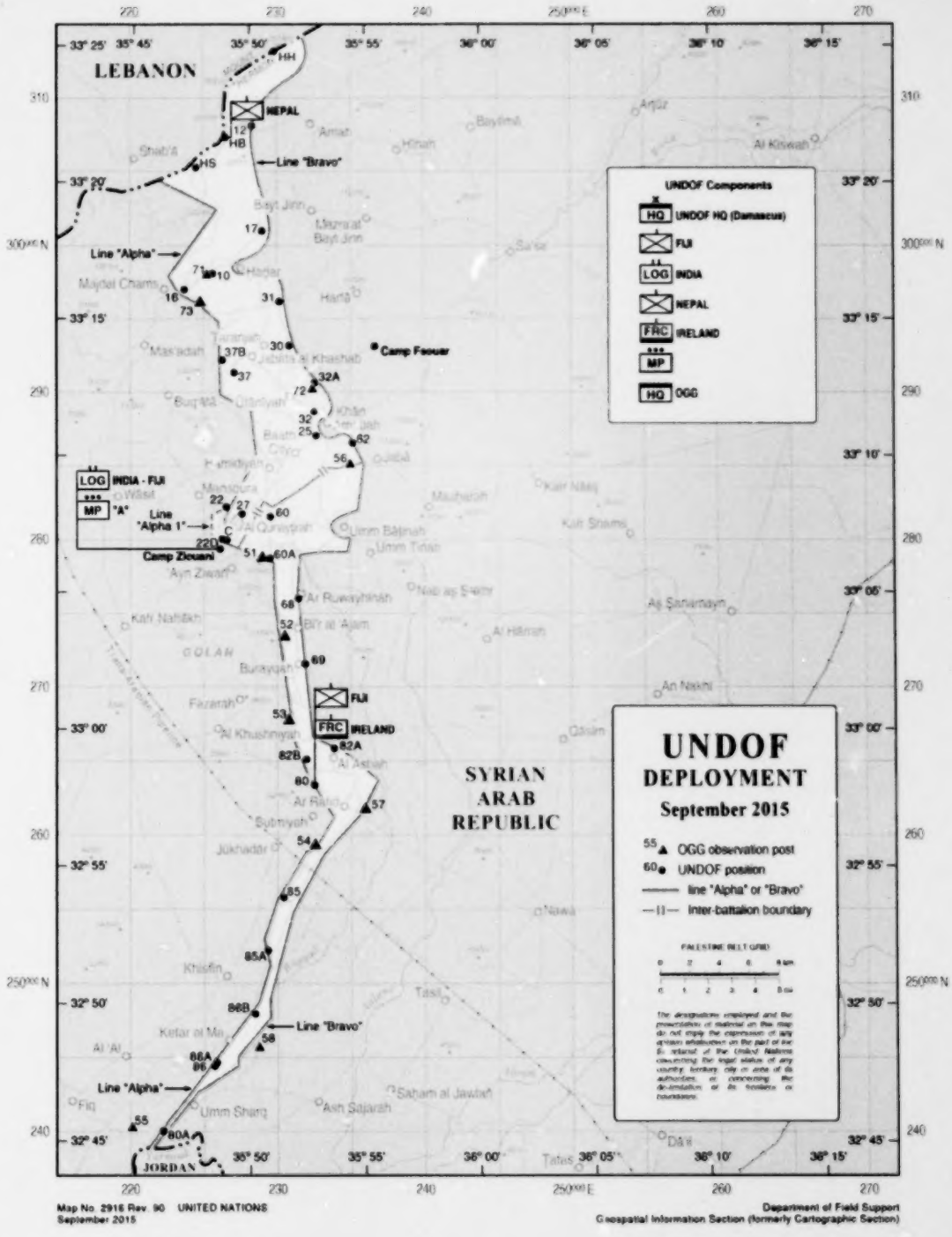
35. It is equally critical that the Security Council continue to bring its influence to bear on the parties concerned to ensure that UNDOF is accorded the ability to operate freely. It is essential that UNDOF continue to have at its disposal all the

means and resources necessary to allow it to return fully to the area of separation as the situation permits.

36. The confidence and commitment of troop-contributing countries in UNDOF remain key factors for the mission's ability to continue to carry out its mandate. I am grateful to the Governments of Fiji, India, Ireland, Nepal and the Netherlands for their contributions. I am also thankful to the Governments of Bhutan and the Czech Republic for delivering on their commitments of new contributions to UNDOF. In addition, I am grateful to the Member States contributing military observers to UNTSO.

37. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to the Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major General Purna Chandra Thapa, and the military and civilian personnel serving under his leadership who continue to perform with efficiency and commitment and under challenging circumstances the important tasks assigned to them by the Security Council. I have full confidence that UNDOF will continue to use its best efforts to carry out its mission.

Annex


LEBANON
SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC
JORDAN
NEPAL
FIJI
FRC IRELAND
LOG INDIA - FIJI
MP "A"
Line "Alpha"
Line "Alpha 1"
Line "Bravo"
Camp Faouar
Camp Ziouani
UNDOF Components
HQ UNDOF HQ (Damascus)
FIJI
LOG INDIA
NEPAL
FRC IRELAND
MP
HQ OGG
UNDOF
DEPLOYMENT
September 2015
OGG observation post
UNDOF position
line "Alpha" or "Bravo"
Inter-battalion boundary
PALESTINE BELT GRID
The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.
Map No. 2916 Rev. 90 UNITED NATIONS
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Report of the Secretary-General on Abyei

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 27 of Security Council resolution 2230 (2015), in which the Council requested me to continue to inform it of progress in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and to bring to its immediate attention any serious violations of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area, of 20 June 2011 (S/2011/384, annex). It provides an update on the situation in Abyei and on the deployment and operations of UNISFA since the issuance of my previous report, of 16 June 2015 (S/2015/439), as well as on progress made in the implementation of the additional tasks mandated to UNISFA under Council resolution 2024 (2011) relating to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism.

II. Security situation

2. The overall security situation in the Abyei Area remained stable but unpredictable during the reporting period, with no major clashes between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities. The Government of the Sudan continued to maintain between 120 and 150 oil police personnel inside the Diffra oil complex in northern Abyei, in violation of the Agreement of 20 June 2011 and multiple Security Council resolutions. In addition, the presence of small numbers of suspected armed personnel of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and armed Sudanese police personnel was observed, in contravention of the same Agreement and Council resolutions. UNISFA continued to implement its multifaceted conflict prevention and mitigation strategy aimed at preventing intercommunal clashes during the rainy season.

3. Reverse migration continued in most parts of the northern and central sectors of Abyei, with the Awlad Umran, Awlad Kamil and Mizaqina Misseriya subclans migrating northwards with their livestock and properties. The migration has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of Misseriya migrants present in the Abyei Area. During the year 2014-2015, approximately 12,980 Misseriya migrants entered the Abyei Area, and the remaining balance of about 3,300 migrants is mostly located in the vicinity of Diffra.

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4. UNISFA facilitated 36 Joint Security Committee meetings with traditional and community leaders in the Abyei Area, conducted 3,752 day, night and special patrols and undertook 599 escorts. Company Operating Bases remained deployed in Dokura and Abyei in the central sector; Marial Achak, Athony, Panton, Tajalei and Agog in the southern sector; and Farouk, Diffra and Todach in the northern sector.

5. A number of violations of the Agreement of 20 June 2011 occurred during the reporting period. On 10 June 2015, UNISFA troops on patrol in the general area of Mabil heard gunfire originating from Dare, about 4 km away. On reaching the area, the patrol observed a group of armed men, suspected to be SPLA soldiers, who immediately fled upon sight of the patrol. While conducting a detailed search of the area, the patrol found one Dinka fatality.

6. On 10 August, UNISFA received information that four men had been killed and two injured in Shegeg, approximately 70 km east of Diffra. A patrol was launched to verify the information and, on reaching the Shegeg area, found one PG-7 anti-tank rocket, two small light vehicles and one damaged motorcycle. The rocket was taken into the temporary custody of UNISFA in the Diffra Company Operating Base, and an investigation into the incident is under way.

7. On 23 August, a UNISFA patrol observed excavation work being carried out with 20 excavators and four bulldozers in the general area between Kabdud and Mekines. Thirty-one armed Sudanese police personnel were also present in the area. On further enquiry, UNISFA was informed that the work was being conducted on instructions from the Government of the Sudan in order to fortify defences for the protection of the Diffra oil facility from armed groups. UNISFA requested that construction be stopped, but it continues, however. Further investigations are in progress.

8. The United Nations Mine Action Service continued to clear, survey and dispose of explosive hazards throughout the Abyei Area, facilitating freedom of movement for United Nations personnel, humanitarian actors and local communities. The Service carried out non-technical surveys in various communities within Abyei, resulting in the removal of one anti-tank mine and 12 items of abandoned unexploded ordnance. During the period under review, one anti-tank mine, six mortars, two rocket-propelled grenades, one hand grenade, three rockets (various), one rocket motor, two mortar fuses and 22 rounds of small arms ammunitions were destroyed. The United Nations Mine Action Service also completed the construction of a weapons and ammunition management storage facility in Dokura. It contains weapons storage facilities and weapon-cutting shears.

9. Despite the total vacuum in law and order institutions, the crime rate in Abyei has fallen 11 per cent compared to the previous reporting period, with 62 criminal incidents reported, compared to a monthly average from January to June 2015 of 74 criminal incidents reported. Major criminal incidents during the reporting period include theft, assault, fraud and public disturbance.

10. On 9 July, UNISFA was informed by a trader from the Sudan about an attack on a caravan of traders in the general area of Shegeg, approximately 70 km east of Diffra. A patrol was launched from Diffra to investigate and, on reaching the scene of the incident, found two fatalities and three wounded men. The wounded were given first aid and later transported to Diffra Local Hospital for further treatment. They stated that they were traders from El Muglad, located 150 km north of the

Abyei Area, and had been travelling to Mayom, Unity State, South Sudan, to sell their merchandise. They claimed that on reaching the general area of Shegeg, they were ambushed and attacked by unknown assailants, who robbed them of their money and merchandise. The Mission is investigating this incident. The identity of the assailants could not be ascertained.

11. On 22 July, UNISFA observed seven suspected thieves siphoning fuel from a storage tank in an oilfield in the general area of Baloom. On seeing the UNISFA patrol, the thieves fled, leaving their motorcycles and other belongings behind. UNISFA pursued and managed to arrest one suspected thief, who was handed over to the local community in Diffra together with five motorcycles and four empty barrels of fuel. On 27 July, 10 intruders were caught by the UNISFA Quick Reaction Force while trying to enter the UNISFA Force Headquarters compound to commit a theft. The individuals were handed over to the Community Protection Committee.

12. Currently, 24 UNISFA police personnel are deployed at three team sites in the towns of Abyei, Agok and Diffra, conducting daily patrols jointly with the military for security observation and community interaction. The UNISFA police component continues to train UNISFA military personnel in crowd-control management and in countering sexual and gender-based violence. A new concept of operations for the UNISFA police component, which focuses on its support to strengthening the capacity of the community protection committees in accordance with Security Council resolution 2205 (2015), has been developed, and an operational manual is being prepared.

13. During the reporting period, 130 new members of the Community Protection Committee in Agok, southern sector, were provided with basic training by the UNISFA police on statement-taking, the role of the community protection committees in crime prevention, beat and mobile patrols in local communities, arrest and search of persons, crime scene management, human rights during detention, station records management and sexual and gender-based violence issues. The training has been conducted through co-location and on-the-job mentoring in the areas of criminal investigation and public order management. The members provided safety and crime prevention awareness campaigns to the population and managed law and order issues. UNISFA police also trained 36 females in the Abyei Area on promoting awareness of sexual and gender-based violence, including the importance of reporting incidents of such violence. Currently, UNISFA is engaging with Diffra community leaders and the Government of the Sudan on the establishment and operationalization of the Community Protection Committee.

III. Political developments

14. Following the postponement of the traditional leaders' dialogue meeting from the last week of April and then to the second week of May, the meeting was rescheduled for 20 to 23 June in Addis Ababa. It was again cancelled, however, owing to differences between South Sudanese officials concerning the participation of the Ngok Dinka delegation, despite President Salva Kiir having given his approval for the delegation to attend the meeting. Regardless of the cancellation, the Misseriya delegation arrived in Addis Ababa to demonstrate its commitment to the dialogue and await the arrival of the Ngok Dinka delegation. UNISFA and

participants from the African Union also travelled to Addis Ababa for the planned meeting.

15. Further to the cancellation of the traditional leaders' dialogue meeting, the Head of the UNISFA Mission visited Juba on 29 and 30 June for meetings with influential Ngok Dinka political leaders to ascertain the reasons behind the Ngok Dinka delegation's failure to attend the Addis Ababa meeting. During the discussions, some of them argued that the meeting had not been prepared properly, and that the requisite prior coordination among political leaders in Juba and in Abyei had not been adequately carried out.

16. An alternative date for the traditional leaders' dialogue meeting is yet to be set. However, both the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities acknowledge the importance of the meeting as an opportunity to make progress on peace and reconciliation. UNISFA will focus its efforts on exploring ways to further expedite grass-roots-level dialogue at the end of the rainy season in preparation for a larger reconciliation conference at a future date.

17. Following the cancellation of the traditional leaders' dialogue meeting, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union met on 31 July to discuss the Abyei situation. The Government of the Sudan reaffirmed its commitment to previously signed agreements and to cooperating with UNISFA and the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. The representative of the Sudan noted his country's satisfaction with the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee as an effective mechanism, and reiterated the Sudan's commitment to the dialogue of traditional leaders. The representative, however, insisted in his remarks that construction work at Athony airport must not continue.

18. The representative of South Sudan expressed appreciation for the work of UNISFA, but rejected any discussion on matters concerning the joint administration of Abyei, claiming that in a summit meeting in November 2014 President Omar al-Bashir and President Salva Kiir had agreed to abolish the joint administration. The representative informed the Council that the South Sudanese delegation did not participate in the planned June traditional leaders' dialogue meeting because it had not been coordinated with the Government of South Sudan. He stated that the investigation report into the killing of the Paramount Chief should be released before any such meeting, and that there had been ongoing violence in Abyei in May, and therefore a meeting immediately afterwards in June would have been premature. He further reaffirmed the right of the people of Abyei to self-determination. He called on the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to assume its responsibility with regard to Abyei more seriously, including by taking measures to expedite agreements on the proposal to determine the final status of Abyei put forward by the African Union High-level Implementation Panel on 21 September 2013.

IV. Humanitarian situation

19. United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and non-governmental organizations continued to provide humanitarian and recovery assistance to some 88,000 internally displaced persons and returnees in central and southern areas of Abyei, including 6,840 people displaced from Unity State in South Sudan. Meanwhile, the delivery of humanitarian and recovery assistance was extended to

some 15,000 vulnerable agro-pastoralist Misseriyas and around 35,000 seasonal migrants in the northern areas of Abyei in the health, water, sanitation and hygiene, education, nutrition, and food security and livelihoods sectors. Planning for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need during the rainy season has been completed, and food rations have been pre-positioned in warehouses. Planning is under way to move from general food distribution to more recovery-oriented intervention through conditional support with food for assets projects throughout the Abyei Area.

20. Owing to the ongoing conflict in South Sudan, more displaced persons are expected in Abyei. Since early June 2015, around 1,000 conflict-affected displaced South Sudanese persons from Unity State used Diffra in the north of Abyei as a transit point before proceeding to their final destinations in the Sudan. As the influx of displaced populations continues, the humanitarian community has provided them with basic food and non-food assistance through a local partner on the ground during their stay.

21. Internally displaced persons also arrived from Warrap State, fleeing intercommunal violence. The intercommunal clashes and cattle raids since the signing of the Reconciliation Agreement two months ago between the Dinka Apuk and Dinka Aguok have increased tensions in Gogrial County of Warrap State in South Sudan, triggering ongoing population movements. As a result of the clashes, approximately 1,200 displaced persons have arrived in Abyei with more displacements anticipated in the coming weeks. Although the population comprises members of both the Aguok and Apuk clans, the displaced people have assured authorities they intend to live together in peace. Urgent needs of the displaced persons include temporary shelters, emergency household supplies, mosquito nets, water, food and health services. Humanitarian actors on the ground are currently providing assistance to the displaced from their contingency stocks in Abyei.

22. Efforts to support livelihoods continued alongside the provision of food aid. Key activities included vocational training and the provision of agricultural inputs and equipment. During the reporting period, a total of 290 people were trained in skills such as best agricultural practices, food processing, carpentry, masonry and tailoring. The graduates have started businesses within Abyei and there are at least eight new stalls in the Abyei town market operating successfully. Meanwhile, at least 7,200 households received agricultural inputs, including hand tools and an early maturity variety of seeds.

23. In the health and nutrition sectors, 19 health facilities, including two hospitals, continued to provide basic health and nutrition support services throughout the Abyei Area. The Agok hospital received approximately 900 cartons of medicine, and drugs are being pre-positioned in Mayon Ngok, Awal, Rumamier and Mijak public health clinics. Health personnel are also running various health education classes in the southern part of Abyei in an attempt to prevent the current outbreak of cholera in Juba from gaining a foothold in Abyei.

24. In the south of Abyei, 340 vulnerable families, particularly widows, disabled and elderly persons, received kits of non-food items. In the meantime, five boreholes were rehabilitated, and hand-washing facilities were installed in 16 child-friendly spaces and four primary schools. Funding shortfalls, floods caused by heavy rains, and delays in the issuance of security, route and travel clearances by

the Government of the Sudan remain key operational challenges to the delivery of humanitarian assistance in northern Abyei.

25. Activities to ensure the protection of the most vulnerable from violence, exploitation and other abuses also continued throughout the Area. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and a local partner maintained 36 child-friendly spaces, 22 community-based child protection networks, 26 community protection networks and a community policing mechanism; and trained 40 community caseworkers and 60 child-friendly spaces animators in family tracing and reunification, mine awareness and child protection and psychosocial data management. Some 100 members of the community-based child protection networks were trained in monitoring, reporting, follow-up and response against the abuse of children.

V. Status of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism

26. As a follow-up to the assessment of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism and recommendations presented in my report of 16 June 2015, the Force Commander held consultations with the Government of the Sudan and the African Union High-level Implementation Panel to consult the parties on the conclusions of the initial assessment and on a possible way forward.

27. The Force Commander visited Khartoum on 30 June. Sudanese officials called for the full operationalization of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism sectors, expressed their Government's general agreement on the findings of the assessment, and underscored the importance of operationalizing the Mechanism as well as the need for progress in resolving the dispute over the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone and border demarcation. The officials also called for an early resumption of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, which has not met since May 2013. It is envisaged that the meeting, when held, will allow UNISFA to discuss recommendations of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism assessment with the Government of the Sudan.

28. On 3 August 2015, the Force Commander met with the Chairperson of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, President Thabo Mbeki, as well as with the Panel member, President Abdulsalami Abubakar. The Force Commander emphasized the need for the Panel to intensify its efforts in encouraging the parties to address the impediments that prevent the full realization of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, and to make the necessary political commitment and investment for progress on the centreline and the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone. At the request of the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan, the African Union High-level Implementation Panel called for the convening of a meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism in Addis Ababa on 24 August. On 20 August, however, the meeting was postponed to a later date at the request of the Government of South Sudan.

29. The Force Commander is awaiting confirmation of meetings with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence and Veteran Affairs of South Sudan for detailed discussions on Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism

findings and other matters, including the way forward. Meetings have also been sought with the Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

30. Meanwhile, the Government of South Sudan continues to deny UNISFA/Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism landing permissions, in violation of Security Council resolutions 1990 (2011) and 2024 (2011) and the Status of Forces Agreement signed with the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan in 2012. On 14 July, the deployment of a force protection company from Kadugli to Gok Machar was suspended owing to the refusal of landing permission by the SPLA Brigade Commander in that area. The deployment had begun with the first group of 19 troops arriving safely in Gok Machar. The Local Commissioner and the Brigade Commander had both been informed of the deployment and the rotation schedule by the UNISFA Sector Commander a week earlier. During the reporting period, several other scheduled aerial monitoring missions of the Mechanism were cancelled for the same reason.

31. The United Nations Mine Action Service continued its support to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. In preparation for planned ground patrols, the Service delivered various training modules on integrated ground patrols for Mechanism national monitors, international military observers, and elements of the UNISFA Force Protection Unit.

32. In my last report, of 16 June 2015 (S/2015/439), I indicated that I would provide more detailed findings of the Mechanism's assessment conducted from 17 to 29 May 2015. Further to the preliminary conclusions of the assessment, UNISFA and the Secretariat reviewed in further detail the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism concept of operations and operating procedures. Following are a number of adjustments that I would propose to make in order to increase the operational effectiveness of the Mechanism. It should be noted that some of these improvements should only be undertaken if the parties make genuine progress in demonstrating their political investment in the Mechanism, along the lines outlined in my last report, as such progress should be a sine qua non for any improvement in the Mechanism's efficiency.

33. First, Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism monitoring should be conducted with an improved capability to conduct aerial patrolling. The United Nations should explore the procurement of appropriate surveillance aircraft for Mechanism operations. These aircraft would be capable of accommodating a six-person Mechanism monitoring team and would be equipped with high-resolution digital cameras capable of capturing images for subsequent analysis. Improved imagery would assist in determining the need for follow-up verification and investigation patrols, and would help to avoid disagreements between the parties resulting from unclear imagery of personnel and hardware on the ground. In addition, satellite imagery should be used to enhance information-driven Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism operations, giving the Mechanism a greater ability to conduct operations on the basis of analytical data, rather than relying solely on planned aerial patrol routes. Past utilization of satellite imagery by the Mechanism has been extremely useful in assessing the situation on the ground.

34. Secondly, rather than conducting Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism verification operations using team sites as previously planned, monitoring should be conducted by air, and then followed by ground verification and investigation teams dispatched directly from the sector headquarters if required.

Undertaking verification and investigation from sector headquarters would be more operationally effective. Additionally, conducting verification and investigation patrols from the sector headquarters would obviate the requirement to build the majority of the 10 envisioned team sites. This adjustment would reduce the investment cost for the Mission and the requirement to maintain the sites during the rainy season, when no ground patrols would be possible. Ground patrols from the team sites, in a terrain devoid of tracks and that is potentially mined, would be extremely slow and would not meet the intent of the Mechanism. The monthly costs associated with their maintenance would contribute to a greater economy in Mechanism operations, despite the additional costs related to procuring satellite imagery and flying hours.

35. Thirdly, parties should end the practice of requiring the approval of monthly aerial patrol plans, which defeats the purpose and intent of monitoring and verification missions in the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone. Instead, notification of aerial patrols should be provided to the Parties 48 hours in advance. Similarly, the procedure for seeking confirmation from both sides to authorize ground patrols 72 hours in advance should be changed to a notification provided 24 hours in advance. This arrangement would allow sufficient time for the deployment of Force protection ahead of verification and investigation patrols that would need to be on the ground to conduct their work. Should the adjustments be endorsed by the parties, the Force protection requirement for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism may be reduced by one company.

VI. Personnel deployment and Mission support

36. During the reporting period, the UNISFA military component stood at 4,338 personnel (116 military observers/staff officers and 4,222 troops), of an authorized strength of 5,326. The strength of the UNISFA police component stood at 24 police officers (19 men and five women) from six police-contributing countries, of an authorized strength of 50. The total number of civilian staff stands at 226. The Government of the Sudan issued 118 visas for UNISFA personnel; 102 visas remain pending.

37. UNISFA, in support of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, provided logistical support to the rotation of Force protection companies as well as the deployment of its headquarters and two companies (total, 557 troops) from Ethiopia to Kadugli from 8 June to 3 July 2015. Although the refusal of landing permissions from the Government of South Sudan is likely to have an adverse effect on the provision of United Nations rations to the troops at Gok Machar, the newly inducted Force Protection Headquarters and Force Protection Company have been successfully deployed and accommodated at Kadugli. Necessary construction works, including office accommodation and voice and data communications, have already been provided for the Gok Machar Sector 1 Headquarters Force Protection Company. Temporary tent ablutions are to be utilized until hard-wall ablutions are prepared; the contract for this work has been awarded. The helipad at Gok Machar and the road from the town of Gok Machar to the UNISFA camp have been completed. However, the fuel tank and the associated fuel services distribution point, although constructed, are not yet operationalized.

38. In the southern sector, UNISFA completed the rotation of 969 troops for their deployment from five dry season camps at Um Khariet, Alal, Noong, Dungop and Agany Toak to the wet season camps. The transformation of Marial Achak dry season camp into a wet season camp with a capacity of 57 troops has been completed.

39. Meanwhile, the work at Athony airport remains suspended because of the opposition of the Government of the Sudan to having it continue.

VII. Financial aspects

40. The General Assembly, by its resolution 69/294 of 25 June 2015, appropriated the amount of $268.3 million for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016. As at 25 August 2015, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNISFA amounted to $83.5 million. Total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to $4,404.2 million. Reimbursement to the contributing Government for troop and contingent-owned equipment costs has been made for the period up to 31 May 2015 and 31 March 2015, respectively, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

VIII. Observations and recommendations

41. Tension in the border areas between the Sudan and South Sudan has risen in recent months, with both countries accusing the other of supporting, sponsoring and harbouring each other's rebel movements. In view of the internal conflicts within the Sudan and South Sudan, both Governments have paid limited attention to restoring their dialogue over the management of Abyei and implementing their border security agreements. The resolution of the dispute over the final status of Abyei and the implementation of the Agreement of 20 June 2011 and the agreements of September 2012 on border security remain, however, paramount to the consolidation of peace and stability between the Sudan and South Sudan. I hope that the regional unity displayed in recent weeks over the completion of the South Sudan negotiation process, led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and the signing by Riek Machar, the former detainees and President Kiir of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan on 17 and 26 August 2015, respectively, will also have a positive impact on relations between the Sudan and South Sudan and lead to the resumption of their cooperation. UNISFA, in partnership with my Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan, will continue to encourage and support stable and peaceful relations between the two countries and engage with both Governments to encourage progress on outstanding bilateral issues.

42. The Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan must do more to respect and implement their Abyei Agreement of 20 June 2011. Both countries have continued to violate the Agreement and related Security Council resolutions through the presence of their armed personnel within the Abyei Area. The Sudan has continued to deploy some 120 to 150 armed oil police around the Diffra oil complex. UNISFA continues to observe incursions by armed suspected SPLA personnel inside the southern parts of the Abyei Area. There is a need for both parties to the Agreement

of 20 June 2011 to respect their accord, related Security Council resolutions, and the resolution adopted at the 9th Abyei Joint Oversight Committee meeting on 30 March 2015, in which the meeting "reiterated the need that the Abyei Area be a weapons-free zone".

43. With the extension, on 14 July, of the UNISFA mandate for a further five months (see Security Council resolution S/223 (2015)), I believe that the Mission will be able to build on what has been achieved so far. This includes enhancing engagement and dialogue with the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities, in close collaboration with the African Union, the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan, the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee and other stakeholders to assist in the implementation of international agreements concerning Abyei.

44. There can be no substitute for dialogue. The Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan must allow the traditional leaders to meet and discuss their grievances face to face. Both Governments must ensure that the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee meets regularly to work towards the full implementation of the Abyei Agreement of 20 June 2011. I continue to urge both parties to do everything possible to ensure that the Abyei Area is demilitarized and becomes weapons-free. I also call upon the African Union High-level Implementation Panel to intensify its efforts in engaging with the parties, together with UNISFA, in order to generate the necessary momentum to move forward. The ongoing conflicts in the Sudan and South Sudan also continue to have an impact on the peace and stability of the Abyei Area, as demonstrated by the influx of displaced persons into the area. UNISFA will continue to monitor the movement of displaced persons, ensure security in the Abyei Area and work closely with the various humanitarian and other actors to facilitate assistance to the most vulnerable.

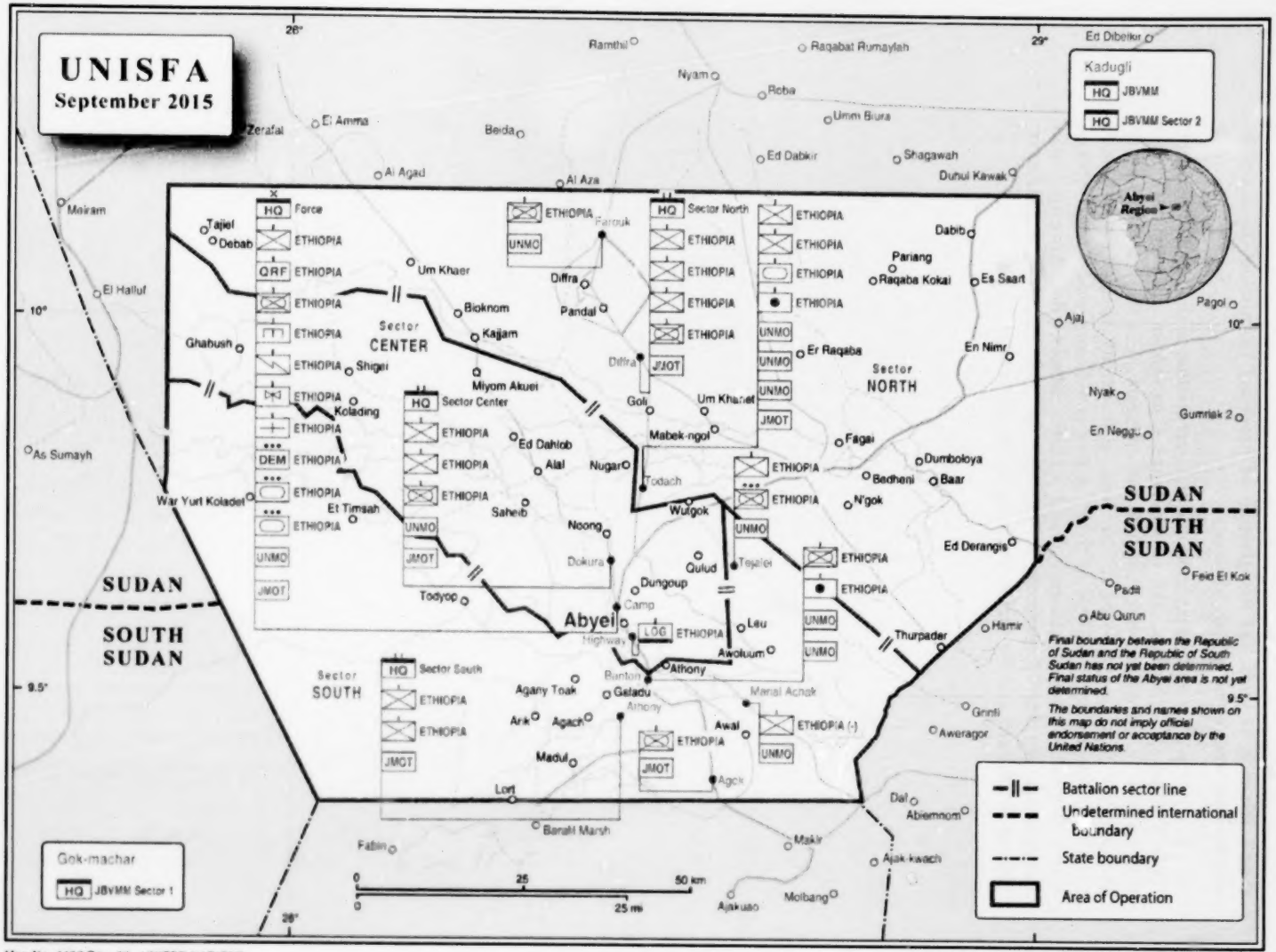
45. The Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism has been subject to frequent denials of freedom of movement by officials from the Government of South Sudan in relation to its mandated activities in the region of Gok Machar. This calls into question the Government of South Sudan's commitment to implementing the Mechanism. In its latest resolution, 2230 (2015) of 14 July, the Security Council made continued investment in the Mechanism contingent on a set of conditions, which included the granting of full freedom of movement to the Mechanism and related personnel. I urge the Government of South Sudan to provide unrestricted freedom of movement without delay to UNISFA flights. I also urge the Government of South Sudan to meet with UNISFA at the earliest opportunity to discuss the Mechanism assessment and proposals.

46. The postponement of the planned Joint Political and Security Mechanism meeting on 24 August is disappointing. UNISFA stands ready to attend the meeting when it is rescheduled and, as requested, to provide its assessment on the status of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. I urge the parties to reconvene Joint Political and Security Mechanism meetings as soon as possible, and to find an agreement on the exact location of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone centreline. UNISFA is ready to formally present the outcome of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism assessment to the parties at its next meeting.

47. As I have done consistently, I continue to call on the Sudanese authorities in Khartoum to provide increased levels of support to UNISFA. This includes the

timely issuance of visas and the granting of necessary permissions to conclude construction work at the Athony airstrip.

48. Lastly, I wish to extend my gratitude and appreciation to the Head of Mission, Haile Tilahun Gebremariam, and to the Force Commander, Lieutenant General Birhanu Jula Gelalcha, for their diligence and engagement in the search for peace and stability in the Abyei Area. I also wish to thank my Special Envoy, Haile Menkerios, the former President of South Africa and Chairperson of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, Thabo Mbeki, the African Union Commission and the Government of Ethiopia for their sustained engagement, support and diligence in the search for peace in the Abyei Area.



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